

# AHURA MAZDĀ AND ĀRMAITI, HEAVEN AND EARTH, IN THE OLD AVESTA

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The two epithets of the Old Iranian supreme god that make up his name, *mazdā* and *ahura*, may refer to his two functions as primordial poet-sacrificer god, who by his divine sacrifice created the ordered cosmos, and as ruler of the universe and father of many of its constituents, respectively. Moreover, as god of heaven he is the father and consort of Ārmaiti, “genius” of the earth, who, when fertilized by heaven in an act of incestuous sexual union, produces her “works” to benefit all living beings.<sup>1</sup>

For Stanley  
*vohū manañhā*  
*haiθiiaūuarāštām hiiat vasnā frašō.təməm*

IN THE AVESTA, the principal function of the supreme god, Ahura Mazdā, is the ordering of the cosmos (see Kellens 1989) and the upholding of the cosmic Order,<sup>2</sup> whose visible aspects are the sun and the sun-lit heavenly spaces, and he is its ruler, as expressed in the *Yasna Haptañhāiti*:<sup>3</sup>

*iθā āt yazamaidē ahurəm mazdām*  
*yā gəmčā ašəmčā dāt*  
*apascā dāt uruuarāscā vañhiš*  
*raocāscā dāt būmimčā višpācā vohū*  
*ahiiā xšaθrācā mazēnācā hauuapañhāišcā* YH.37.1–2

Thus, in this manner we are sacrificing to Ahura  
Mazdā,  
who put in (their) places both the cow and Order,

(who) put in (their) places both the good waters and  
the plants,  
(who) put in (their) places both the lights and the earth  
and all good (things in between),<sup>4</sup>  
by *his* command and greatness and artistries.

Ahura Mazdā is also said to have engendered the Order of the world as its father (as a rhetorical question in 2.44.3), and, as an artisan, to have fashioned many of its elements (2.44.5). Finally, in the function of divine poet-sacrificer,<sup>5</sup> he brought forth by his thought the

<sup>1</sup> My thanks to the volume editors for providing helpful remarks in general and for keeping an eye on my Rigveda translations in particular.

<sup>2</sup> See Skjærvø (2003) for a discussion of what I think are the fallacies in Lüders’ (1951) arguments for translating Old Indic *ṛtā-* and Avestan *aša-* as “truth” rather than as “(cosmic/social/ritual/poetic) order.” See also Duchesne-Guillemin 1962: 194–96.

<sup>3</sup> The numbers preceding the *hāiti* (sections of a *Gāθā*) numbers identify the five *Gāθās*: 1 = *Ahunauuaiti Gāθā* (*Yasna* 27.13, 28–34), 2 = *Uštatauaiti G.* (*Yasna* 43–46), 3 = *Spəntāmaniiū G.* (*Yasna* 47–50), 4 = *Vohuxšaθrā G.* (*Yasna* 51), and 5 = *Vahištōišti G.* (*Yasna* 53, 54.1); *YH* = *Yasna Haptañhāiti*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Yašt* 13.153 *iməmca zəm yazamaide aomca asmanəm yazamaide tāca vohū yazamaide yā antarəstā* “And we sacrifice to this earth, and we sacrifice to yonder sky, and we sacrifice to the good things that are in between” (Kellens-Pirart III: 140).

<sup>5</sup> Ahura Mazdā is a sacrificing god in the Pahlavi writings, e.g., *Bundahišn* 3.20 *Ohrmazd abāg amahrspandān pad Rabihiwin <gāh> mēnōy ī yazišn frāz \*sāxt andar yazišn kunišn dām hamāg bē dād* “At Midday Ohrmazd with the immortal gods prepared the spirit of the sacrifice. During the performance of the sacrifice the entire ‘creation’ was established” (see also Molé 1963: 126–32). The Old Avestan poet-sacrificer’s sacrifice of his own life breath and bones perhaps follows the example of the primeval man, whom god sacrificed to create the world, or even that of god himself as primeval sacrificer and victim, like the Old Norse god Óðinn, who sacrificed himself to himself (*Hávamál* 138–40).

cosmic Order:<sup>6</sup> 1.31.19 *yā mañtā ašəm* “(He) who (first) thought Order” (cf. Skjærvø forthcoming).

I believe the two epithets, *ahura-* and *mazdā-*, which make up his name—in the same way that the three epithets of the heavenly river: *arəduui- sūrā- anāhitā-* “the lofty, life-giving, unattached/unblemished (heavenly water),” also constitute her name—may refer to the two functions of ruler and engenderer versus poet-sacrificer.

In the same way that Ahura Mazda is associated with heaven both in the Zoroastrian myth and in the later dialects, e.g., Khotanese *urmaysde* “sun,” his daughter-consort *Ārmaiti* is associated with the earth, both in the Zoroastrian myth and in the dialects (see below).

#### AHURA MAZDĀ, GOD OF HEAVEN

In the *Old Avesta* the two epithets of the supreme god are still independent, although either of them is likely to be followed by the other in the same strophe. Two Old Avestan strophes appear to “define” the epithets (cf. Nyberg 1937: 108):

*mazdā saxʷārē mairištō yā zi vāuuərazōi pairi.ciθiṭ  
daēuuāišcā mašiiāišcā yācā varəšaitē aipī.ciθiṭ  
huuō vicirō ahurō aθā nē aṇhaṭ yaθā huuō vasaṭ* 1.29.4

“Mazdā” (is) he who remembers best the \*verses.<sup>7</sup>

For (those that have been performed till now—  
whenever (it may have been)—

by *daēuuas* and men, as well as (those) that will be  
performed hereafter—whenever (it will be)<sup>8</sup>—

<sup>6</sup> Ohrmazd “thinks” the creation in *Bdh.* 1.19: *u-š nazdist dahišn xwadā-dād nēk-rawiṣnih ān mēnōy i-š tan i xwēš padīš weh bē kerd ka-š dahiṣnih menid* “And his first creation was \*self-established well-being (Avestan *uštātāt*), that spirit by which he made his body better when he thought the creation.” The abolition of chaos by thinking Order is paralleled by YHWH’s abolition of chaos by speaking (forth) the lights. The difference between the two may be that Ahura Mazda had no audience, while YHWH perhaps had one (cf. Levenson 1988: 5, 158 n. 14).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. RV *śákvan-*, f. *śákvari-* “clever, artful,” type of verse in *Rigveda* 7.33.4, 10.71.11 *śákvariṣu* “in Ś. verses,” and Middle/Modern Persian *saxwan/soxan* “word, speech.” The word has been explained in various ways.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, assuming *°ciθiṭ* is for *°ciṭ + iṭ*. If *pairi.ciθiṭ* and *aipī.ciθiṭ* are verbal forms, then they must mean “may he point out(?) (those) now” and “may he point out(?) hereafter.” The zero grades in *°ciθiṭ* would be caused by a retraction of the accent onto the preverb; cf. nominal formations such as *fra-xšnu-* beside *zānu-*. A very different analysis of this strophe in Insler 1975.

*he*, the “Ahura,” (is) the one who discriminates  
(between them = passes judgment on them).<sup>9</sup> It shall  
be for us in the way that *he* shall wish!

*aṭ frauuaxšiiā aṇhəuš ahiia vahištəm  
ašāṭ hacā mazdā vaēdā yā im dāt  
ptarəm vaṇhəuš varəzaiiaṇtō manəṇhō  
aṭ hōi dugədā hušiiəoθanā ārmaitiṣ  
nōiṭ diβzaidiiaṭ vīspā hišas ahurō* 2.45.4

Thus, I shall proclaim the *best* (announcement) of

(= about?) this *ahu*

in accordance with Order: “Mazdā” (is he who) knows

(him) who established it

(to be) the father of the good thought which

invigorates (you),

but his daughter (is) *Ārmaiti* of good actions/works.

The “Ahura” (is he) who \*keeps an eye on all (things)  
for (them) not to be deceived.

According to my translation, Ahura Mazda is he who keeps track of all statements ever (notably, ritual poems) and passes judgment on them, as well as he who protects his creatures against the forces of evil and his Ordered cosmos against the chaos of the Lie, the cosmic deception that wishes to lead his creatures astray. Thus, the epithets of the supreme deity refer to a double function: politico-legal and poetic-sacral.<sup>10</sup> It is as the supreme, cosmic *ruler* that he, like the Achaemenid king, ensures peace and prosperity for the world, and it is in his capacity as supreme poet-sacrificer that he judges the output of poet-sacrificers in this world to see if they are competent and guarantees their fees and livelihood.

<sup>9</sup> Syntactic analysis after Kellens 1995: 355 (Kellens supplies “activité rituelle” as object of *vicirō*), but I assume that if *saxʷārē* refers to a kind of utterance, we have the metaphor of “making (working) poems” (cf. 2.45.3 *yōi im vā nōiṭ iθā maθram varəšənti* “(those) of you who shall *not* perform/produce (it) in this way, the poetic thought”), paralleled by Old Norse *yrkja* (specialized in the meanings of making poems or “working” the earth, as in Avestan, but not in other old Germanic languages), with or without direct object, “make (poems)”: *yrkja kvæði (vísu, lof, níð)* “compose a (long/short) poem, a poem of praise/blame,” *hann orti vel* “he composed well,” *yrkjast á* “compose at one another” (in the poetic context); already Runic: *worahitō* “I composed (it)” on the Tune stone, *wurte runoR* on the Tjurkö bracteate (Grønvik 1981: 148–61, 160). Insler assumes that the forms *vāuuərazōi* and *varəšaitē* are transitive and mean “to bring about,” but the transitive middle forms of this verb are more easily interpreted with “dynamic” middle function, that is, “produce something for oneself, produce one’s own.”

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Benveniste 1969, 2: 15.

The same two functions (or, at least the poetic formulas), we may note, devolve upon the Rigvedic Varuṇa, for instance in *Rigveda* 1.25.20, where he is said to be the one “who pays attention” and also “rules over all heaven and earth” (*tvām víśvasya medhira divás ca gmás ca rājasi*), and Indra is similarly characterized in *Rigveda* 4.16.2: “a thought-poem for him who has taken notice (and so knows), the asurian one” (*cikítúṣe asuryāya mánma*).

Other Old Avestan passages where this dichotomy is (more or less) apparent are the following:

... *ərəšuuāiš tū uxđāiš mazdā zaraθuštrāi aojōṇhuuat rafənō*  
*ahmaibiiācā ahurā yā daibišuuatō duuaēšā*  
*tauruuāiāma* 1.28.6

... Through (your, or: on account of his) capacious<sup>11</sup> utterances, (you gave,) O Mazdā, support with strength to Zarathustra.

(Give) us, too, O Ahura, support by which we shall overcome the hostilities of the hostile one.

*aṭ θβā mējhī paouruuīm mazdā yazūm stōi manañhā*  
*vanhēuš patarēm manañhō hiiaṭ θβā hēm cašmaini*  
*hēngrabəm*  
*haiθīm ašahiiā dāmīm anjhēuš ahurēm šīiaoθanaēšū*  
 1.31.8

Thus, I (now) think with (my) thought of *you* (as being) the first, O Mazdā, (yet) youthful father of good thought—since I have grasped *you* in (my) eye  
 (as) the true *dāmi* of Order (and seen you) in the actions/works of this *ahu* (as) the Ahura.

In 1.28.6 he is invoked as Mazdā in connection with Zarathustra, the first (human) poet-sacrificer (see Skjærvø 2002a), and as Ahura for his martial capacity, while in 1.31.8 he is Mazdā in connection with good thought, the poet-sacrificers’ most treasured possession (see Skjærvø forthcoming), and as Ahura in the context of maintaining the cosmic Order, which requires his royal command, not mentioned here, but commonly elsewhere in this context.

Mazdā in the context of poetry is also seen in 1.34.15 *mazdā aṭ mōi vahištā srauuašcā šīiaoθanācā vaocā* “O Mazdā, thus say my poems conferring fame (and my) actions/works (are) the best!” and

*ahiiā maniiēuš spēništahiiā vahištəm*  
*hizuuā uxđāiš vanhēuš ēəānū manañhō*

<sup>11</sup> See Skjærvø 1997: 111.

*ārmatōiš zastōibiiā šīiaoθanā vərəziiat*  
*ōiā cisti huuō ptā ašahiiā mazdā* 3.47.2

(For) he produces the best of this most life-giving inspiration

by the utterances of (his) good thought (to be sped) along by (his) tongue,<sup>12</sup>

(and) the actions/works of Ārmaiti by (his) hands, through this understanding: He there (is) the father of Order: Mazdā.

Ahura in martial context is also seen in 1.29.2 *kām hōi uštā ahurēm yā drəguuō.dabiš aēšəməm vādāiioi* “Whom do you (all) wish (to be) an Ahura for her, (someone) who may push back, together with those possessed by the Lie, (their) wrath?”; 1.29.10 *yūžəm aēibiiō ahurā aogō dātā ašā xšaθrəmcā / auuaṭ* ... “You (all), O Ahura, shall (now) establish for *these*, on account of the Order (of my ritual?), strength, as well as (for yourself?) *yonder* command.” In the following strophe Ahura is in martial context (being asked to deal with failed poet-sacrificers and other evil ones) and Mazdā in the context of caring for the poor:

... *kū ašauuā ahurō yā iṣ jiiātēuš hēmiθiiaṭ*  
*vasē.itōišcā*  
*taṭ mazdā tauuā xšaθrəm yā ərəžəjiiōi dāhi drigauuē*  
*vahiō* 5.53.9

... Where (is) an Ahura who sustains Order, who might deprive them of (their) livelihood and freedom to roam?

That, O Mazdā, (is) your command, by which you shall give the better (thing) to the poor living a straight life.

That Ahura Mazdā is also related to the divine Heaven is clear from many details. Thus, he is the father of Ārmaiti, genius of the earth (2.45.4), as well as of Good Thought (1.31.8, 2.45.4), which, I believe, as

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1.32.16 *ēəānū* ... *išiiēṇṇ* “speedy (words? to be sped) along”(?), 3.50.6 *dātā xratēuš hizuuō raiθīm stōi / mahiiā rāzēṇṇ vohū sāhiṭ manañhā* “May the maker of the guiding thought instruct the chariot-horse/charioteer of (this) tongue / of mine (how) to be through my good thought (the chariot-horse) of the straight utterance(?)”, and 4.51.3 *ā vā gēuš.ā hēmiiatū yōi nē šīiaoθanāiš sārəṇtē / ahurō ašā hizuuā uxđāiš vanhēuš manañhō* “Let the Ahura (= the fire) steer up to your ears (the words) which are attaching themselves to our actions, / (up) through Order/by the Order (of my ritual), by the utterances of (my) good thought (sped along) by (my) tongue.” Cf. Old Indic *iṣya-* + *vācam* (*Rigveda* 9.30.1, 64.9, 25), *rātham* (*Rigveda* 1.34.10).

cosmic constituent, may represent the luminous cover of the sky, and of *aša-* (2.44.3, 3.47.2), the cosmic Order that manifests itself in the bright diurnal sky. In the Achaemenid period (ca. 400 B.C.), Herodotus (1.131–32) observed that “the Persians are used to offer sacrifices to Zeus on the top of the highest mountains. They call Zeus the entire vault of heaven.”

The “greatness” of Ahura Mazdā, mentioned in YH.37.2 (see above), is matched by that of the Rigvedic and Homeric Fathers of Heaven (cf. Schmitt 1967: 155). It is repeatedly emphasized in the Old Persian inscriptions in the adjective *vazarka-* “great” applied to Ahura-mazdā and the noun *vašnā* “by the greatness” (of Ahuramazdā; see Skjærvø 1999: 38–39).

Ahura Mazdā does not seem to be heaven itself, however; this role appears to fall to Good Thought. As I have tried to show elsewhere, the cosmogonic terminology in the Old Avesta indicates that Good Thought is the counterpart of *Ārmaiti*, the earth (Skjærvø forthcoming).

Finally we may note the epithet *vouru.cašānē* “far-seeing” (1.33.13)<sup>13</sup> matches Old Indic *urucākṣan-*, which in the *Rigveda* (7.35.8, 7.63.4) is applied to the (rising) sun (*sūrya urucākṣā*), and in Greek to Zeus (Gk. *eurú-opā* [Zeús] “far-seeing [Zeus]” Hesychius).

#### AHURA-

Among the various etymologies that have been proposed for the word *ahura-* (Old Indic *asura-*), one of the more interesting is the one by which the word is derived from an old verb meaning “engender” (Hittite *ḫāš-/ḫašš-*) (see Schlerath 1968, Watkins 1995: 8). The concept of the supreme god as the progenitor of heaven and the inhabitants of the universe is also seen in the ancient expression *\*dīēus pātēr* “Father, Heaven,” which survives in Latin Ju(p)iter, etc. (see Schmitt 1967: 149–56), and the reference to supreme deities as “father (of gods and men).” Among the Vedic passages cited by Schmitt (1967), note especially *Rigveda* 10.82.3ab (to Viśvakarman) *yó naḥ pitā janitā yó vidhātā dhāmāni véda bhūvanāni víśvā* “He, who is our father, progenitor, (and) arranger, he knows the establishments, all beings”; *Atharvaveda* 2.1.3c *sá naḥ pitā janitā sá utā bāndhuḥ* “He, our father, progenitor, and he the connection . . .”

If my interpretation of Good Thought also as heaven is correct, then 1.31.8 *vanhēuš patarēm manahō* and

2.45.4 *patarēm vanhēuš . . . manahō* may be the Old Avestan poetic transformation of Indo-European *\*dīēus pātēr* “Father Heaven.” With the expression *patarēm vanhēuš varəzaiañtō manahō* “the father of the good thought which invigorates (you),”<sup>14</sup> we may even compare *Rigveda* 6.70.6ab *úrjaṃ no dyaús ca pṛthiví ca pinvatām pitā mātā viśvavidā sudāmsasā* “Let heaven and earth make swell for us invigorating strength, the expert<sup>15</sup> father and mother who know all.”

#### MAZDĀ-

As for *mazdā-*, it is usual today, after numerous studies devoted to the word throughout the history of Avestan studies, to render this epithet of the supreme god as “wise” or, alternately, “Wisdom.” By the latter interpretation *mazdā-* is identified with Old Indic *medhā-*, but this is an action noun meaning “the act of . . .,” while *mazdā-* is an agent noun meaning “he who. . .” The texts themselves show more clearly what the Old Avestan poets themselves associated with the word. Thus, the common verb *māng . . . dā-/maqz-dā-* means to “put (and keep) in the mind, keep mental track of,” and the derived adjective *humazdra-* “who keeps good mental track of, who pays attention to.”<sup>16</sup>

In fact, the passages in which the term occurs indicate that it is specifically by “paying attention to, noting in one’s mind” what is spoken by or to the poet-sacrificer that one becomes knowledgeable, and so can see one’s rewards through the returning daylight. In addition, the poet-sacrificer counts on the gods to determine, on the basis of their store of knowledge of precedents, how his own performance asserts itself and stands up to scrutiny.

The Rigvedic term *medhirā-* (< *\*mṛzdhara-*) is etymologically almost the same as *maqzdra-* (< *\*manzdhara-*, or both < *\*manzdhara-* with *āzdh* > *edh*?) and is used in the same kind of contexts as the Old Avestan terms; cf. *Rigveda* 1.61.4ad *asmā́ id u stómaṃ sám hinomi . . . índrāya viśvaminvām médhirāya* “For him I urge on a song of praise . . . which sets all in motion, for Indra,

<sup>14</sup> For the poetic formula cf. *Rigveda* 5.41.18 (to Viśve Devāh) *tām vo devāḥ sumatīm ūrjáyantīm íṣam aśyāma* “This good thought of yours that invigorates, O gods, this strengthening, may we reach it!”

<sup>15</sup> Avestan *dah-* in *dahma-*, etc., seems to denote the expert (= completely knowledgeable) and so qualified poet-sacrificer.

<sup>16</sup> Kellens-Pirart: “qui a (tout) présent à l’esprit, attentif.” Note *Odyssey* 1.321 *thēke ménos* “she had put ménos (in his thūmós);” with different syntax, but same lexical items (see Nagy 1990: 113).

<sup>13</sup> Regarded by Nyberg (1937: 109) as epithet of the diurnal sky: 1.33.13 *rafəðrāi vourucašānē dōiši moi yā vā abifrā* “You shall show me (now) for support for the farseeing (sun) the path by which I shall cross over to you.”

who pays attention”; *Rigveda* 7.87.4a–c *uvāca me vāruṇo médhirāya trīḥ sapta nāmāghnyā bibharti / vidvā padāsya gūhyā nā vocat* . . . “Varuṇa said to me, who pay attention: the cow carries three times seven names. The one who knows the foot-print/place/word(?) shall say it like (someone who reveals) secret things.”<sup>17</sup>

The importance of thought or memory of the origins as expressed by the root \**men* in Indo-European poetry is seen in numerous ancient Indo-European languages, not least the Germanic ones (cf. Ford 1992: 36, 108, citing from *Völuspá* and *Beowulf*), and the connection of the supreme god with poetry is seen in Scandinavian mythology, where Óðinn is also god of skaldship.

Finally, I think it is this dual function of Ahura Mazdā that is the target of the *Ahuna vairiia* prayer, after which the *Ahunauuaiti Gāθā* is named and which is, no doubt, its first strophe.<sup>18</sup> On the basis of the discussion above, the stanza may be interpreted as follows:

*yaθā ahū vairiio aθā ratuš ašātciṭ hacā*  
*vanḥēuš dazdā mananḥō šiaoaθananam aṇēuš mazdāi*  
*xšaθrəmā ahurāi.ā yim drigubiiō dadaṭ vāstārəm*  
 1.27.13

Inasmuch as (an *ahu?* is) a worthy one<sup>19</sup> by the  
 (example of the first) *ahu*, thus (its) Model (is) just in  
 accordance with Order.

<sup>17</sup> Renou, *ÉVP* V, 71; VII, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Its free position in the extant text of the *Yasna* can be explained in two ways: (1) it was originally the first stanza of the *Ahunauuaiti Gāθā*, but was detached because of its contents and prominence and became the most effective prayer in all of Old Iranian mythology, or (2) there was already a tradition of the efficacy of this prayer, which was therefore (adapted) and attached to the *Ahunauuaiti Gāθā* as its opening stanza. From the point of view of composition, the first alternative must be preferred: the other *Gāθās* all begin with a generic and compact statement that sets the tone for the rest of the *Gāθā*. Note also that each of the five *Gāθās* (Avestan *pañca gāθā*) is preceded and followed by praises and invocations, as well as their smaller constituents, the *hāitis*. It is therefore quite possible that the introductory strophe of the entire *Old Avesta* was preceded and followed by a separate set of praises and invocations, which eventually separated it from the next strophe (1.28.1), as also happened in the case of the *Ā iriīāmā išiio* prayer, *Yasna* 54.1, which forms the concluding strophe of the *Vahištōišti Gāθā* (5.53).

<sup>19</sup> The meaning of *vairiia-*, Old Indic *vārya-*, as deduced from the texts, is in the semantic sphere of “worthy, appropriate, matching, well-deserved” as exchange gift. Thus, it would be similar to Gk. *ákaios* “appropriate (gift);” “match (for an

(The Model)<sup>20</sup> of good thought<sup>21</sup> (and) of the works of the (first/new) *ahu*<sup>22</sup> is (always) established for (him who is) Mazdā “Memorizer;”  
 and the (royal) command (is always assigned) to (him who is) Ahura “reigning Lord,” whom one shall (thereby) establish<sup>23</sup> (as) pastor for the poor.

Thus the stanza is a credo by which the poet-sacrificer’s model for his good thought and actions is referred to God as *mazdā*, and the sovereign command, resulting from the successful sacrifices of both, is referred to him as *ahura*. Then, by his good thought and actions, Ahura Mazdā can perform the divine cosmic sacrifice designed to revitalize heaven and earth and her actions, and by his royal command he is able to ensure peace and pasture and general well-being.

#### ĀRMAITI, GENIUS OF THE EARTH

While Ahura Mazdā is thus revealed as the ruler and progenitor of his Ordered cosmos, as far as humans are concerned these qualities are manifested in their effects on their life on earth, which carries them; cf. *YH.38.1 imam āaṭ zəm . . . yazamaidē yā nā baraiti* “Thus, we are offering up in sacrifice . . . this earth which is carrying us.” But the earth by her actions/works also produces the good things on earth which Ahura Mazdā engenders, and so the two are their parents.

The word *ārmaiti-* (Old Indic *arāmati-*) is commonly derived from the verb *arām man-* “thinking in correct measure, balanced thinking,” as opposed to “too much” or “too little,” which is *tarō.maiti-* (*tarō man-*) “thinking beyond its measure,” especially “think (too) little (about),

enemy).” Nowhere is there any indication that the word is used as a verbal form, a gerundive “that ought to be chosen.” There are no Old Avestan examples of a masc. noun qualified as *vairiia-*, and assuming a gapped *aṇhuš*, inherent in *ahū*, seems the best solution. The interpretation of *ahū* as nom. sing. = *aṇhuš* (as also in the later Zoroastrian tradition) is ad hoc.

<sup>20</sup> Or: the garment of good thought: *vastrəm*, echoed in *dadaṭ vāstārəm* and “rhyming” with *xšaθrəm*?

<sup>21</sup> Note that the terms “actions” and “good thought” may implicitly refer to the beneficial “works” of Ārmaiti = the earth, and the beneficial sky, respectively, see above and Skjærvø forthcoming.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. 2.43.6 cited below. Or does *mazdāi* govern *šiaoaθananam*: “Mazdā ‘Memorizer’ of the actions of (the first) *ahu*”?

<sup>23</sup> I take *dadaṭ* to be 3 sg. subj.; it could also be 3 pl. inj.: “whom they (= one) (always) make . . .”

scorn" (see Skjærvø 2002b). This meaning is not, however, evident in the texts themselves, where Ārmaiti is personified as a deity, the daughter of Ahura Mazda. In fact, since the connection between *ārmaiti*- and *nam*- "bend in reverence/homage" is quite strong,<sup>24</sup> "(wifely) humility, submission" (from Lat. *humilis* < *humus* "earth, ground") may be closer to the inherent idea and thus provide a perfect match for her wise lord and husband, father of her children. Their relationship is graphically described in 3.47.1 *mazdā xšaθrā ārmaiti ahurō* "By (his/my) command Mazda (together?) with Ārmaiti (or: throughout the earth?) (is) the Ahura," where Ārmaiti is snugly ensconced between Ahura Mazda's two components, safely guarded by his royal command.

In Old Indic, according to Renou (*ÉVP* I, 1–2), *arā-mati*- is literally "thought put in correct form, thought ready (for the poetic games)" but also a deity. Here, its "abstract" meaning is therefore closely connected with poems and poetry. This connection is perhaps also inherent in her Old Avestan epithet *bərəxδā*-,<sup>25</sup> although we do not know its exact meaning:

*yōi spəntəm ārmaitim θbahiiā mazdā bərəxδəm vidušō  
duš.šiiāθanā auuazazaṭ vanhēuš əuuistī  
manahō . . . 1.34.9*

(Those) who \*let down life-giving Ārmaiti—

\*esteemed, O Mazda, by your "knower"—

those of bad actions/works, on account of not finding  
good thought . . .

<sup>24</sup> See 3.49.10 *nəmascā yā ārmaitiṣ* "and the reverence on account of which Ārmaiti (is present)" or: " . . . which Ārmaiti (is) with"; *Yasna* 58.1 *hiiaṭ nəmē huciθrəm ašiṣ.hāgəṭ ārmaitiṣ.hāgəṭ* "which is the reverence of good seed/splendor(?) that follows Aši, that follows Ārmatī"; and cf. *Rigveda* 5.43.6, 7.42.3, 7.43.1, 10.82.1.

<sup>25</sup> Also 2.44.7 *kə bərəxδəm tāšt . . . ārmaitim* "Who fashions Ārmaiti, the \*esteemed one?" and probably 3.48.6 *bərəxδē* "O \*esteemed one." The word is probably the part. nec. of *bərəj-aiia*-, the meaning of which may be in the semantic sphere of "praise," cf. Khotanese *bulj*- "praise." The Avestan root must be from *\*b(h)argh* with Indo-European *gh* or *g<sup>h</sup>*, not *\*b(h)arj<sup>h</sup>* with *gh*. These words may be further connected with Old Indic *bṛh*-, *barhaṇā*- (perhaps also *brahman*-), the meaning of which is also not quite clear; it seems to be in the range of "strengthening," but also connected with thought and speech (*Rigveda* 1.54.5c, 6.26.5a, 6.44.6a, 9.10.4a), and is probably different from *barh* = Avestan *barz*- "high." Perhaps we should compare Old Norse *bragr* "making poetry" and *Bragi*, god of poetry (see Mayrhofer, *EWA* II, 212–13; Grønvik 1981: 219–20, with refs.).

Ārmaiti is both Ahura Mazda's daughter and the Earth, both in the Old Avestan texts and in the later Avestan texts, as well as in several other Old Iranian mythologies (Persian, Sogdian, Khotanese).<sup>26</sup> She is therefore the counterpart of heaven ~ Good Thought, and this couple therefore corresponds loosely to the Old Indic couple *dyāvā-prthivī*-.<sup>27</sup> The connection of *arāmati*- with the earth is also transparent in a Rigvedic passage:<sup>28</sup> *Rigveda* 10.92.5ab *prā rudrēṇa yayinā yanti sindhavas tirō mahīm arāmatim dadhanvire* "The streams go forth with speeding Rudra. They have spread out flowing all over great Arāmati"; cf. *Rigveda* 10.49.9ab *ahām saptā sravāto dhārayam vṛṣā dravitnvāḥ prthivyām sirā ādhi* "I, the bull, hold (in their courses) the seven streams, the waters which flow over the earth."

As the earth (goddess) Ārmaiti purifies mortal women after birth:

*vanhuiiā cistōiṣ šiiāθanāiṣ ārmaitē  
yaozδā mašiiā<sup>29</sup> aipi zaθəm . . . 3.48.5*

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Nyberg 1937: 122–23, referring to 3.48.5, 6, 11; 3.47.3; 2.46.12; Molé 1963: 19 (referred to in Kellens 1994: 137): "Ārmaiti est déesse de la terre et de la fécondité et, en tant que telle, fait croître l'empire impérissable pour les Entités"; Benveniste 1969, II; 182: "C'est donc bien en tant qu'ancienne divinité du sol que *Spandaramet* s'est trouvé transféré en arménien au rôle de Dionysos comme dieu de la fertilité." In Khotanese, *ššandrāmatā*- < proto-Khotanese *\*čūantā*- *ār-mati*- is identified with the Buddhist Śrī as goddess of the earth (see Skjærvø 1998: 653), while the word for "earth" is *ššan-daā*- from *\*čūantakā*-, originally perhaps an (independent) epithet of Ārmaiti-.

<sup>27</sup> Note that the word *diiau*- has all but disappeared from Old Iranian. Its only occurrence is, significantly, in *Yašt* 3.13 to *Aṣəm Vahištəm* "Best Order," where, in a sequence of magical, apotropaic spells, we are told how *Aṣəm Vahištəm* first smote the Evil Spirit, who "fell headlong from heaven" (*paouruua. naēmāṭ pataṭ diiaoš*).

<sup>28</sup> Molé (1963: 171) also cites *Rigveda* 5.43.6, see below.

<sup>29</sup> The reading *mašiiā* is found in two branches of the *Pahlavi Yasna* MSS (*Persian Pahlavi Yasna*: *mašiiā*; *Sanskrit Yasna*: *mašiiā*), against the *Indian Pahlavi Yasna* (*mašiiā*) and *Persian Videvdat Sadeh* (*mašiiā* Mf2); the reading *mašiiāi* (*mašiiāi*) is obviously later (*Persian Videvdat Sadeh*: Jpl, K4; *Yasna Sadeh*, *Indian Videvdat Sadeh*). It is true that the ending -ā could be explained as perseveration from the preceding *yaozδā*, but it would still be a remarkable error for the straightforward *mašiiā*. The fact that readings other than *mašiiā* have failed to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the strophe also does not speak in their favor. (Insler reads *ārmaiti* with Jpl, the jun-

... By the actions/works of (my/your?) good understanding, O Ārmaiti, you make mortal women (ritually) pure after birth.

And, when the right person is in command, by her “works” (*šiiāoθna-*) she provides all things needed for the well-being of men and cattle, like the “works” of Demeter (see below):

... *yehiiā šiiāoθanāiš gaēθā ašā frādəntē*  
*aēibiitō ratūš sēnghaiti ārmaitiš*  
*θbahiiā xratəuš yəm naēciš dābaieti* 2.43.6

... (he) by whose actions/works the herds are being furthered through Order.  
 For these (actions/works) Ārmaiti is announcing the models  
 of your guiding thought, whom/which no one can make deceiving.

*ašəm šiiāoθanāiš dəbqzaiti ārmaitiš* ... 2.44.6

(... then, clearly, it is) on account of (our) actions/by (her) works (that) Ārmaiti is (currently) \*thickening Order<sup>30</sup> ...

... *təm daēnəm yā hātəm vahištā*  
*yā mōi gaēθā ašā frādōit hacəmnā*  
*ārmatōiš uxδāiš šiiāoθanā ərəš daidiiat*  
*maxiiā cistōiš θβā ištīš usən mazdā* 2.44.10

... the vision-soul which (is) the best of those that are, which, being with Order, may further my herds:  
 shall (she) “see” correctly the actions/works of (my) Ārmaiti through the utterances of my understanding:  
 “The sacrifice (performed) by you (succeeds?) as (you) will, O Mazdā.”

2.45.4, 3.47.2, see above.

*ārmatōiš nā spəntō huuō cisti uxδāiš šiiāoθanā*  
*daēnā ašəm spənūat vohū xšaθrəm manəhā*  
*maxdā dadāt ahurō tēm vaŋhīm yāsā ašīm* 4.51.21

This one (is now) a life-giving man by the understanding: “By (my) utterances (are produced) the actions/works of Ārmaiti;

by (my) vision-soul Order (is again) full of vitality; by (my) good thought Mazdā  
 Ahura establishes (his) command.”—(So now) I am asking him for a good reward.

When darkness and the forces of evil take over, obviously the sky and Order are obscured and cannot be seen from the earth, which trembles in fear:

*vaŋhəuš xšaθrā manəhō ašā maš ārmaitiš vaxšt*  
*utaiiūiti təuuišī tāiš ā mazdā viduuaēšqm θβōi.ahī*  
 1.34.11

... (Through) the command of (= provided by) (my) good thought, Ārmaiti, together with Order, has (now) grown  
 in youthfulness (and) strength. Through those (gifts), here, O Mazdā, (you make) her free from hostilities (when) in fear(?).

If the interpretation of *θβōi.ahī* from \**θβaiiah-* “fear,”<sup>31</sup> is correct, then we may have an allusion to the attack of the Aggressor, at which the earth trembled (or sim.) in fear: *Bundahišn* 6.27, 29: *čiyōn Ganāg Mēnōy andar dwārist zamīg bē \*wizandīd ān gōhr ī kōf ī andar zamīg dād estād pad wizandišn ham zamān kōf ō rawišn estād* ... *pas az ān zamīg* ... *čandēnīdan nē šahist* “When the Evil Spirit rushed in, the earth trembled. That substance of the mountains that had been placed in the earth by the tremor—at the same time the mountains started to move. [Then the mountains are made.] After that, the earth was no longer able to tremble.” In Manicheism, learning of the imminent attack by Darkness, the Five Greatnesses of the World of Light (including the Light Earth, Sogdian *Zāy Spandārmāt*) “trembled” (Bar Khonai, in Jackson 1932: 224). In India, both worlds (*rodasī*, *krandasī*) are often depicted as being in fear (*bhī-*), trembling and shaking. The earth trembles beneath the ride of the Maruts (*Rigveda* 1.37.8, 87.3; 5.60.2), as well as heaven (*Rigveda* 5.60.3), and before the might (*Rigveda* 8.97.14) and *manyu* of Indra (*Rigveda* 1.80.11; 4.17.2, 10).

Only through the worshipper’s contribution can Ārmaiti, the earth, again see Order, the sun-lit sky, and, now at peace, her works can again benefit mankind.

ior member of the *Persian Videvdad Sadeh* [against Mf2]; he also interprets the common *zaθəm* “birth” as containing *zam-* “earth”: \**aipi.zam-θam* “on earth.”) Avestan *mašiiā-* “mortal woman” would be the ancestor of Pahlavi *mašyānī*, wife of *maši*, the first mortal man. Note that this and adjacent strophes contain what is basically the poet-sacrificer’s secret (*gūzra-* “hidden”) knowledge about the universe.

<sup>30</sup> The image may be that of a weaver *packing* in the weft, see Skjærvø forthcoming.

<sup>31</sup> Rather than as a verb \**θβaiiahī* “you fear”; cf. Young Avestan *θβaiiah-* in *θβaiianhant-* (*Yašt* 13.20, epithet of roads, with *dužita-* “difficult to go”), *θβaiiastama-* (*Videvdad* 2.23, epithet of highest mountains and deepest rivers); the connection with Sogdian *ōβy-*, in *wyōβy-*, etc. (Gershevitch, [1961] §293), must be rejected in view of Manichean Parthian *wydbyg* (*wid-bayāg*) “extensive,” which shows that the stem of this word is \**duaj-*, not \**θuj-* (cf. Parthian *nidfār-* “hurry” < \**ni-θujār-*).

astuuat ašəm xiiāt uštānā aojōnhuuat  
 xʷəng darəsōi xšaθrōi xiiāt ārmaitiš  
 ašim šīiaoθanāiš vohū daidit manahā 2.43.16

May Order have bones through (my/his) life breath  
 (and be) strong!

May Ārmaiti be in command (and) in (full) sight of the  
 sun!<sup>32</sup>

May she on account of (my) actions/by (her) works  
 give (me my) reward for (my) good thought!

It is in fact the revitalization of Order *and* Ārmaiti that is the purpose of the Old Avestan ritual. Order produces the heavenly elements needed for *growth*, and Ārmaiti receives them and produces living things, notably *pasture* for the cow, and thus ensures *peace* (Herrenschmidt 1991: 19):

ahiiā maniiēuš tuuəm ahī tā spəntō  
 yə ahmāi gəm rāniō.skəraētīm hēm.taša  
 at hōi vāstrāi rāmā dā ārmaitīm  
 hiiat hēm vohū mazdā hēma.fraštā manahā 3.47.3

You are (also the father?) of (or? belong to?) this  
 inspiration—(being) life-giving through it—  
 you who fashioned together the pleasure-giving cow  
 for this one.

Thus, for him you now establish Ārmaiti (as) peace for  
 (his) pasture  
 when he has consulted, O Mazdā, (his) good thought.

In the ritual sphere, therefore, just as the ritual Order matches the divine Order, we would expect a match also for Ārmaiti, which is probably the ritual ground, toward which the sacrificer bends (*nəmah-*) with *ārmaiti-* “humility.” In fact, according to the Pahlavi texts, the ritual ground as microcosmos represents the entire earth, with the positions of the seven priests corresponding to the seven continents (see Molé 1963: 121).

Because of this ambiguity inherent in the term, we should then expect the mention of Ārmaiti to refer both to the poet-sacrificer’s state of mind and the disposition of the ritual. The following strophes may contain such references:

<sup>32</sup> Cf. 1.32.13 *yə iš pāt darəsāt ašahiiā* “which shall keep them from the sight of Order.” Rigvedic *svarḍś-* “having the sight of the sun,” cf. Kuiper 1960: 220. Cf. *Rigveda* 3.30.13 (to Indra) *didṛkṣanta uṣāso yāmann aktōr vivāsvatyā māhi citrām ānikam* “They desire to see the great, splendid face of dawn as she shines out from darkness at (her) coming.” See also Kellens-Pirart III: 169.

aēbiiō mazdā ahurō sārəmnō vohū manahā  
 xšaθrāt hacā paiti.mraot ašā huš.haxā xʷənuuātā  
 spəntam və ārmaitīm vaŋhīm varəmaidī hā nā aŋha  
 1.32.2

These (ones here) Mazdā Ahura, who sides with  
 (someone of) good thought,  
 answers by virtue of (his) command (as) a good  
 companion of Order which contains the sun:  
 “We have chosen your life-giving Ārmaiti, the good  
 one. She shall belong to us.”

2.44.10, see above.

From the above, we see that the “works” of Ārmaiti strongly recall Hesiod’s “works,” on which see Vernant (1996: 277): “La terre d’Hésiode est terre de labour. Le même mot *érge* designe en grec le champ et le travail. De cette terre cultivée, par opposition à la terre sauvage ou simplement féconde, Déméter est la divinité. Dans la représentation de ce pouvoir divin, il y a toujours un plan qui se réfère à l’activité, à l’effort humain. On dit: les travaux de Déméter.” Cf. the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 467–73 (Rhea speaking to Demeter): “[But come, my child,] and be not too angry unrelentingly with the dark-clouded Son of Cronos; but rather increase forthwith for men the fruit that gives them life” (translation after Loeb edition).

According to Hesiod’s *Theogony* (912–13), Zeus bedded “all-nourishing (*poluphórbē*) Demeter,” who then bore him Persephone. The myth of Demeter and Persephone found its way into the Iranian culture sphere and, in Armenian, *Spandaramet* is “Dionysus” (as fertility god), and the adjective *sandaramet-* means “chthonic,” presumably with reference to the realm of Persephone.

Among the more arcane mysteries of Order and Ārmaiti is the concept of the structure of the cosmos, perhaps in the form of a great loom on which Order is woven by the poet-sacrificer’s good thought, with Ārmaiti as the weaver(ess) packing in the web of the web of good thought held up by Ahura Mazdā (2.44.6 *ašəm šīiaoθanāiš dəbqzaiti ārmaitiš* “by (her) actions/works Ārmaiti is (now) thickening Order”; see Skjærvø forthcoming).

In later Zoroastrianism, Ārmaiti is both the daughter and wife of Ahura Mazdā, by whom she is made fertile. The origin of the myth of a sexual relationship between Ahura Mazdā and Ārmaiti, the earth, is no doubt that of heaven lying upon the earth, which led to the sexual interpretation found in many religions, e.g., Old Indic (cf. Keith 1925: 77, and especially 80): “The parent *par excellence* is Dyaus, and earth also is the mother of the many things she bears. Sky and earth too are universal



parents: the sky fertilizes the earth, and again both produce life in the world, the one by the gift of rain, the other through providing food.” The sexual act between Heaven and his daughter (Earth, Dawn?) is also described in the *Rigveda*, e.g., 1.71.5 (to Agni) *svāyām devō duhitāri tvīṣim dhāt* “The god placed the shimmering seed in his own daughter.”

As mother of all living beings dwelling upon her, the earth is also depicted as the carrier of everything: *YH.38.1 imam āaṭ zam gənābiš haθrā yazamaidē yā nā baraiti* “Thus, we are offering up in sacrifice together with (its) women this earth which is carrying us.” Similarly, in *Videvdad* 2.10 (etc.), it is Ārmaiti who is said to be the carrier of all living beings. The Rigvedic goddess Bhārati-, also with the epithet *mahi-*, may, originally, be an aspect of the same goddess, probably that of the earth that carries everything upon her; cf. *Rigveda* 1.22.10 *ā gnā agna ihāvase hóitrām yaviṣṭha bhāratim / várūtrīm dhiṣānām vaha* “O Agni, (convey) hither the women for help, O youngest one: Hotrā, Bhārati, Varutrī, Dhiṣānā”; cf. *Rigveda* 5.43.6ab, in which *arāmati* is clearly a deity: *ā no mahīm arāmatim sajōṣā gnām devīm nāmasā rātāhavyām* “(Convey) hither to us the great Aramati, (you who are) of the same taste, the divine woman, the goddess, in homage (to whom) the oblation is offered!” Note also the use of the plural, paralleled in Old Indic, in *YH.38.2*:

*ižā yaoštaiiō fəraštaiiō ārmataiō  
vañ’hīm ābiš ašim vañ’hīm išəm  
vañ’hīm āzūitīm vañ’hīm frasastīm  
vañ’hīm parəndim yazamaidē*

The milk offerings, the purifications, the  
Juicifications,<sup>33</sup> the Ārmaitis—  
the good reward on account of these,  
the good invigoration, the good fat oblation,  
the good fame, the good fecundity we are offering up  
in sacrifice.

With this compare *Rigveda* 3.4.8 *ā bhāratī bhāratibhiḥ sajōṣā īlā devatr manuṣyēbhir agnīḥ / sārāsvatī sārāsvatēbhir arvāk* “Hither Bhārati of the same taste as the Bhāratis, Ilā (of the same taste) as the gods. Agni (of the same taste) as mortal men, Sarasvatī (of the same taste) as the Sārāsvatas!” and *Rigveda* 2.31.4b–d *tvāṣtā gnābhiḥ sajōṣā jūjuvad rātham / īlā bhāgo bṛhaddivótā ródasi*

<sup>33</sup> Since one of the goals of the sacrifice is to make Order “full of swelling” (4.51.21: *ašəm spānuuat*), I assume *fraša-* (if connected with Old Indic *prkṣ-* and if this is “liquid strengthening” of some sort) means “full of the juices of life and vitality.”

*pūṣā púraṃdhir aśvínāv ádhā páti* “Tvaṣṭr, of the same taste as the (divine) women, shall speed the chariot along, (as also will) Ilā, Bhaga, Bṛhaddivā, and the two Worlds, Pūṣan, Púraṃdhi, the Aśvins, then the two masters.”

There are, finally, a few interesting parallels with Aditi: *Rigveda* 1.136.3 *jyótiṣmatim áditim dhārayát-kṣitim svārvatim* “The resplendent Aditi, who upholds (good) dwellings, who is full of sun.” And with 1.32.2 *spəntəm vā ārmaitim vañ’hīm varəmaidī hā nā aṇhaṭ* “We have chosen your life-giving Ārmaiti, the good one. She shall belong to us,” compare *Rigveda* 10.100 (refrain) *ā sarvātātīm áditim vṛṇīmahe* “we choose for ourselves wholeness and *aditi*.”<sup>34</sup>

With all this compare from Hesiod’s *Theogony* 176: “And great heaven (Ouranos) came, bringing on night; and, lusting for love, he lay around the earth, stretching himself upon her in all directions”; and *Theogony* 132–33, where Earth lies with Heaven, after which she bears Ōkeanos, Kronos, and numerous other “unfinished” beings. We may recall here the Rigvedic myth of *mārtāṇḍa*, last of Aditi’s sons, and the Zoroastrian myth in the *Pahlavi Rivayat* (43.36) that Gayōmard was born from Spandarmad, the earth.<sup>35</sup>

When Ahura Mazdā’s royal Command (*xšaθra-*), by the agency of the sacrifice, is (re)established in heaven, Heaven presumably releases its fertilizing fluids, and the sun spreads its light and warmth throughout the world; then Ārmaiti produces her works on earth, providing fertility, growth, and prosperity for men and animals (1.34.11; 2.46.12, 16; 3.47.1, 49.5; 4.51.4, 20–21). Note especially:

*... kuθrā yasō.xiiēn ašəm kū spəntā ārmaitiš  
kuθrā manō vahištəm kuθrā θβā xšaθrā mazdā  
Y. 4.51.4*

<sup>34</sup> Note also that in Iranian cosmology the earth is said to be suspended in the middle of the cosmos *unattached*; cf. *Bundahishn* 34.5 *ud ka-iz-im zamīg dād kē hamāg axw ī astōmand barēd u-š abar dāštārih ī gētīy nēst* “and also when I established the earth, which carries the entire bony existence, it too had nothing in the world of the living to hold it up.” This recalls the etymology of *aditi-* “having no bonds” from *dā-* “bind.” Brereton (1981: 196) concludes from the etymology that it means “boundlessness” (and, further, “blamelessness, innocence”) rather than “bondlessness,” but if that is the meaning I believe it must be secondary.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. the foundation legend of Khotan, according to which the founder of Khotan was the son of Vaiśramaṇa and suckled by the earth (Sanskrit *Śrī*, Khotanese *Śśāndrāmātā-*); Skjærvø 1998: 653, 656.

... Where (is) Order which brings glory? Where (is)  
life-giving Ārmaiti?  
Where (is) best thought? Where (will you come?) with  
your command, O Mazdā?

Compare *Rigveda* 6.50.3 (to Viśve Devāḥ):

*utā dyāvāpṛthivī kṣatráṃ urú  
bṛhád rodasī śaraṇám suṣumne  
mahás karatho várivo yáthā no  
'smé kṣáyāya dhiṣaṇe aneháh*

And broad, O Heaven and Earth, (is your area of)  
command and high, O you two worlds, (your)  
protection, O you well-disposed ones!  
You will make a great expanse so that we will have<sup>36</sup>  
absence of harm for us (and our) dwelling, O you  
two powers that put everything in its place(?)!

and *Rigveda* 6.67.6 (to Mitra, Varuṇa):

*tā hí kṣatráṃ dhāráyethe ánu dyúṣṇ  
dṛmhéthe sánum upamād iva dyóḥ  
dṛlho nákṣatra utā viśvādevo  
bhúmim átān dyāṃ dhāsínāyóḥ*

For as such you two maintain the command day after  
day; you two hold firm the back of heaven as if from  
above it.  
(Thus) held firm, the heavenly body too, belonging to  
all the gods, has stretched out hither earth (and)  
heaven by their *dhāsí*.

and, emphasizing the role of the command of the poet-  
sacrificer, *Rigveda* 1.160.5 (to Heaven and Earth):

*té no gṛṇāné mahinī máhi śrávaḥ  
kṣatráṃ dyāvāpṛthivī dhāsatho bṛhát*

<sup>36</sup> Absence of constriction, Avestan *anqzah-*, x<sup>3</sup>*āθra-* “good breathing space” (or: “freedom to move about”).

*yénābhí kṛṣṣís tatánāma viśvāhā  
panāyyam ójo asmé sám invatam*

You two great ones, whose praises we have sung, O  
sky and earth, give us great fame and exalted power  
by which we can stretch out to (all) the lands for all  
days. Send us quickly enormous might.

One purpose of the Old Iranian sacrifice is the (re)fer-  
tilization and rebirth of the cosmos (the new *ahu*, the  
cosmic fetus about to be born or just born, the new Life),  
through the sexual union of Ahura/Heaven and Ārmaiti/  
the earth.<sup>37</sup> From such a point of view, it is quite pos-  
sible that the sacrificer, once he has proved himself and  
become like Ahura Mazdā, also enters into the same  
kind of relationship with *his* Ārmaiti, that is, his humil-  
ity as well as the ritual ground. As the *nā spənta*, the  
“life-giving man,” he is also filled with the juices of  
life and fertility, and his rigid posture in the race (see  
Skjærvø forthcoming) may well refer to (symbolize) the  
erect male member.

In the Pahlavi literature the importance of the sexual  
union between Ahura Mazdā and his daughter Ārmaiti is  
set in the greater context of three fundamental incestu-  
ous unions: Ohrmazd and Spandārmad, from whom was  
born Gayōmard, whose sperm fertilized the earth; Ga-  
yōmard with Spandārmad, his mother, from whom were  
born Maši and Mašyānī, the first human couple, brother  
and sister, from whom humanity descends.<sup>38</sup> It is im-  
possible, I think, to overlook its importance in the Old  
Avesta, as well.

<sup>37</sup> On marriages between gods, see Frazer 1996: 164–69,  
notably “the sky-god Zeus with the corn-goddess Demeter”  
(p. 165).

<sup>38</sup> Molé 1963: 123; Herrenschildt 1994: 120–24. In *Dēn-  
kard* 9.38.5–6, Wahman, too, is said to result from the union  
of Ohrmazd with his daughter Spandārmad; see Molé 1969:  
329–30; Skjærvø forthcoming.

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